

**NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES**  
**OF**  
**SOUTH TEXAS AND NORTHERN MEXICO**

**ALONSO MARROQÍN PERALES, Ph.D**

**INDIGENOUS CULTURES  
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AND  
NORTHERN MEXICO  
(A Review of the Literature)**

**THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME – ONCE AGAIN – TO MAKE A PRESENTATION. THIS IS A FIRST FOR ME. I USUALLY DON'T GET INVITED A SECOND TIME AFTER I MAKE A PRESENTATION.**

**I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN OTHER CULTURES – HOW PEOPLE LIVE, THEIR CUSTOMS, THEIR VALUES, THEIR FOLKLORE, CELEBRATIONS, MUSIC, RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS. IT IS A FASCINATION THAT HAS BEEN WITH ME SINCE I WAS A CHILD. MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THE AMERICAN INDIGENOUS CULTURE – BELIEVE IT OR NOT – WAS THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA. I JOINED THE BOY SCOUTS AND SOON WAS INDUCTED INTO THE “ORDER OF THE ARROW.” IT IS A SUB-GROUP OF THE BOY SCOUTS AND IS MADE UP OF SCOUTS WHO STUDY AND PRESERVE THE CULTURES OF THE TRUE NATIVES, THE TRUE TEJANOS, OF OUR COUNTRY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE ORDER OF THE ARROW, NATIONWIDE. IS DIRECTED BY NATIVE AMERICANS WHO SHARE THEIR CULTURE WITH THE YOUNGSTERS.**

THE NEXT BREAK FOR ME WHERE I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY OTHER CULTURES WAS WHEN I RECEIVED A SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN UNAM (UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE MEXICO). WHILE THERE I STUDIED HISTORIA DE MEXICO, GRAMMAR AND FOLKLORE. DURING THE FOLKLORE CLASS, I WAS INTRODUCED TO THE WORKS OF PAULO DE CARVALHO-NETO, A BRAZILIAN FOLKLORISTS. PAULO HAS DONE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH RECORDING AND DOCUMENTING THE CULTURES OF THE INDIGENOUS THROUGHOUT CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA. HIS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR DOCUMENTING NATIVE CULTURES IS RECOGNIZED WORLDWIDE.

LATER THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, APPOINTED ME AS A FULBRIGHT-HAYS SCHOLAR IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND ASSIGNED ME TO UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL IN QUITO AND TO THE UNIVERSIDAD DE GUAYAQUIL – BOTH IN ECUADOR. THIS WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO CONTINUE MY INTEREST IN YET OTHER CULTURES.

WHILE AT THE UNIVERSITY, I FOUND OUT THAT PAULO DE CARVALHO-NETO WAS ASSIGNED TO THE BRAZILIAN EMBASSY IN QUITO. I GOT ALL EXCITED AND IMMEDIATELY MADE AN APPOINTMENT TO MEET WITH HIM AT THE EMBASSY. AT THAT TIME PAULO HAD ORGANIZED THE INSTITUTO FOLKLORICO DEL ECUADOR. HE INVITED ME TO JOIN THE INSTITUTE AND LEARNED METHODS AND

**TECHNIQUES FOR DOCUMENTING INDIGENOUS CULTURES. I LEARNED MUCH ABOUT THE SALACAS, OTAVALOS, INDIOS COLORADOS AND THE JIBAROS.**

**NOW, I AM NOT INVOLVED IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND RELY MOSTLY ON WHAT OTHERS HAVE DONE AND HAVE WRITTEN. I DO HOWEVER TRY TO APPROACH MY READINGS WITH A CRITICAL MIND. THERE IS MUCH MISINFORMATION OUT THERE CONCERNING NATIVE AMERICANS. MUCH OF WHAT IS RECORDED BY EUROPEANS HAS BEEN TINTED BY THEIR BIASES, PREJUDICES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS.**

**IN THE REPORT I AM SHARING WITH YOU THIS MORNING, I CONCENTRATE ON THE CULTURES OF THE RIO GRANDE AREA COVERING THE SOUGHERN PART OF TEXAS AND NORTHERN PART OF MEXICO THAT INCLUDES EL SENO DE MEXICO OR THE GULF OF MEXICO. IN PARTICULAR MY PRESENTATION CENTERS ON THAT AREA BETWEEN THE RIO SAN FERNANDO OR NORTHERN TAMAULIPAS AND EL RIO DE LAS NUECES OR NUECES RIVER. WHEN THE SPANISH ARRIVED IN THIS AREA IN 1519. IT WAS INHABITED BY A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS, AS WE SHALL SEE LATER ON.**

**THREE KEY SOURCES I USED FOR THIS REPORT ARE CABEZA DE VACA, JUAN BAUTISTA CHAPA AND, MARTIN SALINAS. THEIR ACCOUNTS APPEAR TO BE THE EARLIEST DOCUMENTS DESCRIBING IN DETAIL THE GROUPS THAT LIVED AND ROAMED IN THE AREA MENTIONED.**

**WE KNOW THAT CABEZA DE VACA ROAMED THROUGH TEXAS FOR A PERIOD OF EIGHT YEARS (1528-1536). DURING THAT PERIOD HE WAS A CAPTIVE, A TRADER, AND A MEDICINE MAN AMONG ONE OR ANOTHER SOUTH TEXAS INDIGENOUS GROUPS. ON NOVEMBER 6, 1528, THE SHIP CARRYING CABEZA DE VACA WAS CAST ASHORE ON A LONG NARROW ISLAND INHABITED BY NATIVES ON THE TEXAS COAST. UPON REACHING SHORE, HE NAMED THE ISLAND "MALHADADO" – PROBABLY THE SPANISH WORD WE NOW KNOW AS "MALVADO." I SAY THIS BECAUSE OF THE INHOSPITABLE AREA WHERE THEY CAST ASHORE. CONSIDER THE BEACHES OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND DURING THAT PERIOD.**

**THE FIRST GROUP HE ENCOUNTERS IN THAT AREA, CABEZA DE VACA DESCRIBES THE INHABITANTS AS VERY LARGE PEOPLE, WELL FORMED, ARMED WITH BOW AND ARROWS BUT NO OTHER WEAPONS AND SAYS THE NATIVES ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR USE. THEY APPEAR FRIENDLY TO SOME DEGREE. THE MEN HAVE ONE OF THEIR NIPPLES BORED FROM SIDE TO SIDE. SOME HAVE BOTH NIPPLES BORED THE LENGTH OF TWO PALMS AND A HALF AND THE THICKNESS OF TWO FINGERS. HE FURTHER DESCRIBES HOW THE INHABITANTS BORE A PIECE OF CANE – "THREE BREATH OF HALF A FINGER ONTO THEIR LIPS."**

**THERE IS NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY HERE. WE FIND THAT VARIOUS CULTURES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOLLOW THE CUSTOM OF BODY PIERCING. WE FIND THE PRACTICE OF BODY**

**PIERCING AND TATOOING A VERY COMMON PRACTICE TODAY.**

**CABEZA DE VACA CONTINUES AND DESCRIBES THE WOMEN OF THE GROUP AS HARD WORKING. AS BEING "ACCUSTOMED TO GREAT TOIL" DURING THE TIMES THEY STAY IN ONE AREA WHICH USUALLY OCCURS FROM OCTOBER TO THE END OF FEBRUARY. ALSO, HE NOTES HOW THE PEOPLE OF "MALHADADO" TREAT THEIR CHILDREN. THEY TREAT THEM WITH GREAT MILDNESS. CABEZA DE VACA REPORTS THAT CHILDREN ARE TREATED WITH KINDNESS. HE STATES THAT THIS IS CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL NATIVE AMERICANS WHO TEND TO PUNISH THEIR CHILDREN RARELY.**

**UPON THE DEATH OF A SON, THE PARENTS AND KINDRED WEEP AS DOES EVERYBODY ELSE IN THE GROUP. THE WAILING CONTINUES FOR THE DECEASED FOR A WHOLE YEAR. AFTER THE YEAR OF MOURNING HAS PASSED, THE RITES OF THE DEAD ARE PERFORMED. THEY WASH AND PURIFY THEMSELVES FROM THE STAIN OF SMOKE. THEY LAMENT ALL THE DEAD IN THE SAME WAY EXCEPT THE ELDERLY OF WHICH THEY SHOW NO REGRET SAYING THAT THEIR SEASON HAS PASSED. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE ELDERLY HAVE NO ENJOYMENT AND BY COTINUEING TO LIVE THEY OCCUPY THE EARTH AND TAKE FOOD FROM THE YOUNG. THEIR CUSTOM IS TO BURY THE DEAD UNLESS IT BE THOSE WHO ARE PHYSICIANS OR CURANDEROS WHO ARE THEN BURNED. AFTER A YEAR HAS PASSED, THE FUNERAL HONORS ARE CELEBRATED, EVERYONE DANCING AND MAKING HIGH**

**FESTIVITY UNTIL THE BONES BECOME POWDER AT WHICH TIME IT IS MIXED WITH WATER FOR THE RELATIVES TO DRINK.**

**THROUGHOUT THEIR JOURNEY, CABEZA DE VACA AND HIS GROUP UNDERWENT MUCH DEPREVATION. THEY THEN MEET THE QUITOKS – PROBABLY A PHONETIC PRONUNCIATION GIVEN TO THEIR NAME. HE REPORTS, “WE STOOD BY THE FIELD WHILE THE INDIANS GATHERED AND OBSERVED US AND FINALLY APPROACHED US. THEY TOOK EACH OF US BY THE HAND TO THEIR DWELLINGS.” WHILE AMONG THEM, HE REPORTS THAT THEY ATE DAILY NO MORE THAN TWO HANDFULS OF THE PRICKLY PEARS, WHICH WERE GREEN AND SO MILKY THEY BURNED THEIR MOUTHS. THEY THEN WERE ABLE TO BARTER TWO DOGS WHICH CABEZA DE VACA AND HIS COMPANIONS ATE RAW IN ORDER TO GAIN THEIR STRENGTH AND IN THIS WAY CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY.**

**HE NOTES OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GROUP: EVERY MAN IN THE MALHADADO AREA HAS AN ACKNOWLEDGED WIFE. PHYSICIANS ARE ALLOWED TWO OR MORE WIVES WHO LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER.**

- **WHEN A DAUGHTER MARRIES, THE GROOM IS OBLIGATED TO GIVE TO THE WIFE ALL THAT HE KILLS IN THE HUNT OR ALL THE FISH HE CATCHES. THE WOMAN THEN BRINGS THESE ITEMS TO HER FATHER FIRST. AFTERWARDS SHE TAKES THE FOOD TO HER HUSBAND.**

- **NEITHER HER FATHER NOR MOTHER ENTERS THE HUSBAND'S HOUSE. NOR CAN THE HUSBAND ENTER THEIRS**
- **IF BY CHANCE THEY MEET EACH OTHER, THEY TURN THEIR FACES ASIDE CARRYING THE HEAD LOW WITH EYES CAST ON THE GROUND. THEY CONSIDER IT IMPROPER TO SPEAK TO EACH OTHER.**
- **THE SICK WERE TREATED BY CURANDEROS. THE METHOD OF HEALING INVOLVED BLOWING THEIR BREATH UPON THE SICK AND IMPOSING HANDS ALL OVER THE BODY. CABEZA DE VACA WAS ORDERED TO LEARN THE HEALING METHODS SO THAT HE COULD BE OF SOME USE TO THE GROUP.**
- **CABEZA DE VACA LEARNED HOW TO HEAL BY USING STONES AND PEBBLES SINCE, ACCORDING TO THE CURANDERO, CONTAINED SPECIAL HEALING POWERS. PASSING A PEBBLE ALONG THE STOMACH WOULD TAKE AWAY PAIN AND RESTORE HEALTH.**
- **HE ALSO LEARNED TO SCARIFIED OVER THE AREA OF PAIN AND THEN SUCK ABOUT THE WOUND. CAUTERIES ARE DONE WITH FIRE. CABEZA DE VACA TRIED ALL THESE REMEDIES UPON HIMSELF AND FOUND THEY WORKED.**



I NOW WANT TO DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO JUAN CHAPA'S NARRATIVE. IN THE 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, SOUTH TEXAS AND NORTHEASTERN MEXICO FORMED EL NUEVO REINO DE LEON, A FRONTIER PROVINCE OF NEW SPAIN WHERE SPANISH SETTLEMENTS WERE WIDELY SCATTERED AND SUBJECT TO CLASHES WITH THE NATIVE AMERICAN INHABITANTS. CHAPA'S DOCUMENTARIES IS A LINK BETWEEN THE SPANISH EXPLORERS – CABEZA DE VACA, CORONADO AND DE SOTO AND RECORDS THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN THE EARLY 1660'S.

IN 1690, JUAN BAUTISTA CHAPA WROTE HISTORIA DE NUEVO LEON. A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE SERIOUS THREATS TO SPANISH SETTLEMENTS BY TEXAS TRIBES FROM NORTH OF THE RIO GRANDE. THE REGION AROUND CERRALVO AND AS FAR SOUTH AS MONTERREY, INDIANS RAIDED THE SETTLEMENTS IN SEARCH OF SPANISH HORSE HERDS WHICH SUGGESTS THAT NATIVE AMERICANS WERE MOUNTED AND HAD HORSES TO TRADE.

THE WEALTH OF THE AREA FROM WHAT IS NOW CHIHUAHUA AND BORDERING NEW MEXICO ATTRACTED TRIBES SUCH AS THE JUMANO AND THE "CACAXTLES" WHO LIVED NEAR THE SPANISH SETTLEMENTS. CHAPA IS THE ONLY KNOWN ACCOUNT OF TWO LARGE SPANISH MILITARY EXPEDITIONS FROM MONTERREY IN THE 1660'S THAT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE CACAXTLE TRIBE IN THE NORTH.

CHAPA ALSO PROVIDES A LIST OF NAMES OF OVER 250 NATIVE TRIBES LIVING IN THE AREA. THE NAMES ARE PART OF THE PROVINCIAL RECORDS THAT IDENTIFIED THE INDIAN GROUPS FORMALLY ASSIGNED TO "EMCOMIENDA" SYSTEM. THE SYSTEM CALLED FOR THE PROVINCIALS TO GATHER THE INDIANS LIVING CLOSE TO THEIR SETTLEMENTS AND PROVIDE FOR THEM. INDIANS COULD BE ASSIGNED TO A FAMILY OR TO AN INDIVIDUAL FOR CARE AND SAFEKEEPING. BUT THE CARE AND SAFEKEEPING WERE CAST ASIDE AND SOON THE INDIANS WERE REDUCED TO SLAVERY.

THE ENCONMIENDA SYSTEM GAVE THE SPANIARDS LEGAL TITLE, BESTOWED BY THE GOVERNOR OF NUEVO LEON. ONCE THE LEGAL SANCTION WAS FORMALIZED, THE LANDOWNER OR ENCONMENDERO WENT TO THE NATIVE RANCHERIA WITH AN ARMED FORCE, USUALLY SURPRISING IT BY APPEARING AT DAWN. ONCE CAPTURED THE NATIVES WERE PUT IN CHAINS AND TAKEN TO THE ENCOMENDERO'S LAND, WHERE THEY WERE CAREFULLY WATCHED BY A SUPERINTENDENT AND ARMED GUARDS.

THE ENCOMIENDA SYSTEM WAS ABOLISHED AROUND 1698 AND WAS REPLACED BY THE "CONGREGAS" SYSTEM THAT ALLOWED TRIBES TO FORM CONGEGAS OR TOWNS LOCATED NEAR THE MISSIONS. THEY WERE PERMITTED TO ELECT THEIR OWN GOVERNING OFFICIALS. EACH CONGREGA WAS SUPERVISED BY A MISSIONARY AND PROTECTED BY A SPANISH MILITARY OFFICER.

**THE MORE PRESSURE AND THE HARSH PUNISHMENT THE SPANISH PLACED ON THE NATIVES, THE MORE DETERMINED THE NATIVES WERE TO UNITE, FORM NATIONS, FIGHT BACK AND PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR LAND. A CONFEDERATION OF TRIBES FROM PRESENT DAY TEXAS WAS FORMED AND KEPT THE PRESSURE AND RAIDS AS FAR SOUTH AS CERRALVO AND MONTERREY.**

**GOVERNOR ZAVALA RECOGNIZED THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONQUERING THE NATIVES BECAUSE OF THE INACCESSIBILITY OF THE AREAS WHERE THEY LIVED. HE LATER DISPATCHED CAPTAIN ANTONIO ORPINEL FROM HIS HOMETOWN OF MATEHUALA – SOUTH OF MONTERREY. ORPINEL WAS SUCCESSFUL IN TRACKING DOWN AND CAPTURING SOME NATIVES. HE OFFERED THEM CLOTHING, FOOD AND SUPPLIES. ONCE THEY APPROACHED TO RECEIVE THE FREE GIFTS, THEY WERE ATTACKED BY THE SOLDIERS AND IMPRISONED. THEY WERE THEN TURNED OVER TO A MAJOR NAMED JACINTO GARCIA DE SEPULVEDA AND HIS COMPANY. SEPULVEDA HANGED TWENTY-TWO OF THEM AS PUNISHMENT. THE GROUP WERE MEMBERS OF THE “HUALAHUIS” NATION.**

**I NOW WANT TO TURN TO THE LIST OF SOME OF THE TRIBES THAT LIVED IN THE AREA HERE MENTIONED. MARTIN SALINAS, IN HIS BOOK, INDIANS OF THE RIO GRANDE DELTA (THEIR ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN TEXAS AND NORTHEASTERN MEXICO).**

IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1747 OR 1757 WHEN NATIVE NAMES BEGAN TO BE FORMALLY DOCUMENTED. SALINAS RESEARCH LIST CONTAINS AT LEAST EIGHT INDIGENOUS GROUPS WHO RESIDED NORTH OF THE RIO GRANDE AND WHO APPEAR IN THE DOCUMENTS OF 1747 AND 1757. THERE IS NO INDICATION HOW THE SPANISH CAME TO DETERMINE THE SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION OF THE TRIBAL NAMES. ONE SUSPECTS THE NAMES WERE PHONETICALLY RECORDED. I WILL READ A FEW OF THE TRIBAL NAMES RECORDED.

LUG-PLA-PIA-GUI-LAM (CHILES MOCHOS) – SALINAS NOTES THAT BOTH WORDS HAVE MULTIPLE CONNOTATIONS. “CHILE” HERE PROBABLY MEANS “HOT PEPPER LIKE JALAPEÑO, CHILE VERDE, ETC. IT ALSO REFERS VULGARLY TO A PART OF THE MALE BODY THAT SALINAS FEELS IS THE REAL MEANING. THE INDIANS PRACTICED CIRCUMCISION AS A RITE OF PASSAGE FROM ADOLESCENCE TO MANHOOD. WE FIND THE SAME RITUAL AMONG GROUPS IN AFRICA AND AMONG THE ARABS AND JEWISH GROUPS AND IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

MASA-CUA-JU-LA: (LOS QUE ANDAN SOLOS). THIS GROUP WERE WANDERERS OR NOMADS WHO FOLLOWED GAME TO HUNT AND PROBABLY WERE NOT ATTACHED TO ANY PARTICULAR NATION.

PA-RAN-PA MA – TU – JU (BERMEJO LOS HOMBRES). LITERALLY, “THE RED MEN.” THE NAME MAY REFER TO THE SKIN COLOR BUT

**MOST LIKELY MAKING USE OF RED PIGMENT FOR BODY PAINTING DURING CEREMONIES OR FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS. ALSO LIKELY, IS THE USE FOR COVERING THEIR BODIES SUCH AS THE “INDIOS COLORADOS” OF ECUADOR.**

**PAULO DE CARVALHO-NETO AND I WENT TO SANTO DOMINGO DE LOS COLORADOS IN ECUADOR TO RECORD SOME INFORMATION ON THE INDIOS COLORADOS. THIS GROUP LIVES IN THE RAIN FOREST. THEY USE THE ACHOTE BEAN TO FORM A PASTE BY CRUSHING THE BEAN AND ADDING WATER AND THE OIL OF A SPECIAL WORM THAT EXISTS IN THE AREA. THEIR HEAD AND BODY IS COVERED WITH THE PASTE AND SERVES AS A PROTECTION AGAINST BUG BITES AND TORRENTIAL RAINS.**

**PER-PA-CUG: (LOS QUE SE AMARRAN SUS PARTES CON UNA BOLSITA). LITERALLY, THOSE WHO TIE THEIR GENITALIA IN A SMALL BAG. THE PRACTICE CONTINUES AND MAY BE FOUND IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD. THE GENITALIA IS PLACED INSIDE A LONG REED OR BAG MADE OF ANIMAL SKIN OR VEGETATION AND WITH A CORD IS THEN TIED AROUND THEIR WAIST.**

**OTHER NAMES LISTED INCLUDE –PEU-PE-PUG – (CABEZAS BLANCAS – OR WHITE HEADS) ----PEU-PUE – TEM (LOS QUE HABLAN DIFERENTE, OR THOSE WHO HAVE ANOTHER LANGUAGE OR SPEAK DIFFERENTLY) --- SEGU – JU – LA – PEM: (LOS QUE VIVEN EN LOS GUI-A-CHS.) BY THE SOUND, PERHAPS THE WORD REFERS TO**

**“HUISACHE” THE HUISACHE TREE IS SIMILAR TO THE MESQUITE TREE EXCEPT THAT THEIR LEAVES ARE NARROWER AND THINNER. THIS TYPE OF TREE GROWS ABUNDANTLY IN THE AREA.**

**SE-PIN PA CAM: (LOS SALINEROS) PERHAPS REFERS TO SALT OR THOSE WHO LIVE CLOSE TO A SALT LAKE. SALT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF FOOD. THE MODERN HISTORY OF ECUADOR RECORDS THE SALT WARS.**

**W.W.NEWCOMB, JR'S BOOK, THE INDIANS OF TEXAS WRITES ABOUT THE INDIANS OF A LATER PERIOD. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE HISTORIC PERIOD A NUMBER OF SCATTERED BANDS OF NATIVES, SUCH AS THE TONKAWAS, ROAMED OVER MUCH OF CENTRAL TEXAS. THERE IS NO AGREEMENT AS TO WHERE THE TONKAWAS FIT IN THE CULTURES OF THE WESTERN GULF. BY THE EIGHTEEN CENTURY – IF NOT EARLIER – THEY WERE A BUFFALO-HUNTING, TEPEE-USING MOUNTED PLAINS PEOPLE. ASSOCIATED WITH THE TONKAWAS <sup>during</sup> ~~DUING~~ THE PERIOD WERE THE LIPAN-APACHES.**

**MUCH OF WHAT IS WRITTEN ABOUT THE TONKAWAS COMES TO US FROM EITHER THE EUROPEANS INCLUDING THE SPANISH AND FROM THE ANGLO TEXAS SETTLERS BOTH OF WHO HAD A NEGATIVE VIEW OF INDIGENOUS CULTURES.**

**THIS PARTIAL LIST THEN CONTAINS THE FIRST GROUP OF  
NATIVE AMERICANS THE SPANIARDS ENCOUNTERED IN SOUTH  
TEXAS AND NORTHERN MEXICO.**

**THANK YOU**

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(A Review of the Literature)

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